



Progress Report on the National AMBER Alert Strategy

This is the sixth progress report since the October 2002, first-ever White House Conference on Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Children, when President Bush directed the Attorney General to designate a Department of Justice official to lead the effort in expanding the AMBER Alert system nationwide. Regina B. Schofield, Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs is the current National AMBER Alert Coordinator. With the assistance of victims, law enforcement, broadcasters, missing children clearinghouses, and officials from the Departments of Justice and Transportation, the national strategy has been steered in a direction designed to reach the goal of creating a seamless network for AMBER Alerts.

The substantial increase in the number of recovered children since the strategy was put in place is evidence that the national coordination is working well. More than 240 children have been recovered since AMBER Alert began in 1996. ***Over 85 percent of the total number of successful recoveries to date has occurred since October 2002, when AMBER Alert became a coordinated national effort.*** This significant progress is attributable to better coordination and training at every level, increased public awareness, technological advances, and cooperation among law enforcement, transportation officials, and broadcasters. The collaboration of communities, states and territories, coming together to create and improve their AMBER plans, has also made a remarkable difference in the number of abducted children recovered. At the end of 2001, there were only four statewide plans, and now 50 states have statewide plans in place. Much interstate collaboration has developed, foiling abductors who seek to evade capture by crossing state lines.

PROGRESS REPORT to date: Together with our partners in communities throughout the country, we have accomplished the implementation of the national strategy:

- **Assess current AMBER activity**
 - ▶ Determined status of local, statewide, and regional AMBER plans to identify national trends, characteristics, and current procedures.
 - ▶ Evaluated available technology and developed AMBER Alert draft technology standards to promote cooperation among state communications systems.
 - ▶ Held the first-ever AMBER Alert Technology Conference in December 2003 which provided 65 state and local AMBER coordinators access to new technology to enhance AMBER communications. A conference report is posted on the Department of Justice AMBER Alert Web site: amberalert.gov.
 - ▶ Developed an implementation plan to monitor, report, and track national AMBER Alert progress and changes.

- **Create a coordinated AMBER network**
 - ▶ Provided training and guidance on plan development and enhancement for law enforcement, broadcasters, and transportation representatives through regional summits and missing children training courses.
 - ▶ Established federal, state, and local partnerships and promoted agreements among states and communities to develop a seamless communication network.
 - ▶ Partnered with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to convene two Southeast Conferences on Missing and Exploited Children, held in June 2004 and December 2005 (AMBER Alert component included in the training).
 - ▶ Provided **criteria guidance** on issuance of AMBER Alerts, available on the AMBER Alert Web site: amberalert.gov.
 - ▶ Created a mechanism for secondary distribution of AMBER Alerts through agreements between the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and nationally known communication companies.
 - ▶ Partnered with CTIA-The Wireless Association and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in a wireless AMBER Alerts initiative, which has the possibility of voluntarily enlisting over 190 million wireless subscribers for participation in alerts.
 - ▶ Established operational AMBER Alert statewide plans in 50 states.
 - ▶ Worked with the FBI in developing proper usage of the existing child abduction identifier and the creation of a new AMBER Alert identifier for use by law enforcement to enter information into the National Crime Information Center database.
 - ▶ Launched a nationwide initiative to train Child Abduction Response Teams (CART) designed to assist local law enforcement agencies when they respond to incidents of missing and abducted children. CART can be used for all missing children's cases or can be deployed as part of an AMBER Alert.

- **Communicate "lessons learned"**
 - ▶ Held the first-ever National Training Conference on AMBER Alert in August 2003, which brought together teams from every state to receive training, help with AMBER plan development, and best practices information.
 - ▶ Presented the national strategy at over 40 conferences held by broadcasters, law enforcement, and juvenile justice organizations.
 - ▶ Held a meeting in February 2004 with national and state broadcasters and media representatives, obtaining input into a process for expanding and enhancing the AMBER Alert system from a broadcaster/media perspective.
 - ▶ Raised public awareness through the creation of a national AMBER Alert web site and made it more accessible by assigning a new URL: amberalert.gov
 - ▶ Made media appearances; created training videos; and produced and distributed an AMBER Alert strategy brochure.

- ▶ Expanded the AMBER Alert Web site to include a “Toolkit” of resource material for use in commemorating National Missing Children’s Day.
- ▶ Worked with the television program *America’s Most Wanted* on finalizing public service announcements on missing and abducted children for wide distribution in television, radio, print, and Internet media.
- ▶ Integrated AMBER Alert information into existing training programs and publications.
- ▶ Made available on the AMBER Alert Web site a Department of Transportation “best practices” report on the use of Dynamic Message Signs to convey AMBER Alert information.
- ▶ Convened the second National Training Conference on AMBER Alert in September 2004, to share best practices and receive strategy input from every state, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.
- ▶ Produced four new AMBER Alert publications for the use of broadcasters, law enforcement, and the public.
- ▶ Transmitted a report to the White House (October 2004) and transmitted a report to the Congress (July 2005) on the implementation of the AMBER Alert legislation, the activities of the National Coordinator, and the effectiveness and status of the AMBER plans of each state.
- ▶ Coordinated a national AMBER Alert Awareness Day on January 13, 2005, 2006 in commemoration of Amber Hagerman’s abduction on January 13, 1996 in Texas, the tragedy out of which AMBER Alert was developed.

PLANS FOR 2006

- Carry out national AMBER Alert awareness activities on January 13th to commemorate the 10th anniversary of Amber Hagerman’s abduction and murder.
- Conduct an increased number of regional summits and localized training specific to the needs of communities.
- Help to improve communications among state AMBER Alert coordinators through creative use of the Internet, and develop a newsletter to include information about technologies and success stories.
- Train law enforcement officers on the proper usage of the Child Abduction and AMBER Alert identifiers in entering information into the National Crime Information Center database, and work with the FBI to develop a “query” system which leads the data entry officer through the process.
- Develop an Online Training Program for AMBER Alert Call-Takers to improve their response to calls regarding a missing or abducted child.
- Work with U.S. border states and Mexico and Canada to address concerns and issues relating to child abductions that involve border crossings.
- Convene the third national AMBER Alert training conference in July 2006.
- Expand the reach of the wireless AMBER Alerts initiative.
- Work on addressing privacy issues and information sharing problems relative to the use of AMBER Alert in Indian Country.

| AMBER Alert Progress 1999 to date | | |
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| Year | Number of Recovered Children | Number of Statewide AMBER Plans Implemented |
| 1999 | 8 | 1 |
| 2000 | 8 | 1 |
| 2001 | 2 | 2 |
| 2002 | 26 | 28 |
| 2003 | 72 | 15 |
| 2004 | 71 | 2 |
| 2005 | 54 | 1 |
| Total | 241 | 50 |

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